

THE FRICK COLLECTION

MEMBERS' MAGAZINE FALL 2020



Giovanni Bellini's
St. Francis in the Desert

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The *Members' Magazine* is published three times a year by The Frick Collection as a benefit for its members.

Volume 20, Number 2
ISSN: 1534-6412
Editor: Rebecca Brooke



Letter from the Director

It has been more than seven months since COVID-19 began altering our lives and the world around us. While there remain many uncertainties, more than ever before we are committed to providing meaningful, inspirational programming that enriches the lives of our members and other constituents. In the first several weeks after shutdown as the majority of our staff transitioned to working

remotely, we adapted our programs to fit our virtual world, creating new content, ensuring easy access to archived resources, and keeping our growing global audience informed and entertained with weekly e-newsletters, webinars, and at-home activities for families to enjoy together. I am immensely proud of our efforts and so very appreciative of all our friends who have cheered us on and continued to support our work by renewing their memberships, making a donation, or taking the time to leave a comment on social media. Your kind emails and phone calls have meant so much, encouraging us to keep developing the most innovative ways to connect during this unprecedented time. I am especially grateful to all our online guests who helped make our first virtual gala, *Frick on the Move*, a huge success. Thank you!

We continue to make preparations for the ground-breaking of our renovation and enhancement project and the move to our temporary home at Frick Madison, only a few blocks north on Madison Avenue. For the next two years, the Collection will be housed at the Marcel Breuer–designed building, formerly occupied by the Whitney Museum of American Art and, most recently, The Met Breuer. Presenting beloved Frick masterpieces in Breuer's iconic concrete shrine is an unparalleled opportunity for all of us to see the Frick's holdings in a surprising new context. Striking a balance between tradition and innovation, the installation at Frick Madison will depart from the museum's customary presentation style in a domestic setting and instead organize works chronologically and by region. Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Xavier F. Salomon and his team have done a remarkable job envisioning and executing this installation, and we are excited to soon be able to share with you what we have been planning for so many years. In the meantime, we are in the midst of developing some wonderful members-only benefits—including exclusive access and bonus content—to show our gratitude for your ongoing support. Keep an eye on your inbox in the weeks ahead for more details.

If you are in a position to do so, I hope you will consider making a donation to the Annual Fund. From November 1 through the end of December, your gift will be matched dollar for dollar by Trustee Stephen A. Schwarzman, doubling its impact. We are tremendously grateful to Steve for offering this match for the fifth consecutive year, as it helps make possible everything we do.

Thank you again for your involvement. All of us at the Frick are truly inspired by your commitment and generosity.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "I. Wardropper".

Ian Wardropper
Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Director



THE FRICK COLLECTION

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Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1424/1435–1516), *St. Francis in the Desert*, ca. 1476–78, oil on panel, The Frick Collection

The Frick at Home

Coming Together Virtually to Find Inspiration in Art

Since the galleries closed in March, members of the Frick community have visited destinations as varied as a rocky outcropping in Italy, a moody Polish landscape, and the sublime pre-industrial grandeur of Constable Country—all without breaking stay-at-home orders or travel restrictions.

Every Friday evening, far-flung viewers celebrate the end of the week by taking a virtual journey with Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Xavier F. Salomon or Curator Aimee Ng, the hosts of *Cocktails with a Curator*, one of the Frick's most popular new online programs. As 5:00 p.m. approaches, the YouTube chat box lights up in anticipation: "Hello from sunny Seattle!" "Hi from Ukraine." "Good evening from Berlin." "Hola desde Montevideo." "Costa Rica in the house!" Myriad messages pour in, including one from a nurse at Lenox Hill Hospital, fewer than ten blocks from the Frick: "Watching from the ICU. Cheers everyone." The global reach of the pandemic is a reminder of art's capacity to offer collective moments of solace, whether we experience it in sweatpants or scrubs.

Since the inaugural *Cocktails* episode premiered in April, the program's timely reflections on beloved paintings as well as lesser-known sculptures and decorative arts objects from the permanent collection have provided a much-appreciated facsimile of the shared experiences lost to shuttered museums around the world. Soon after *Cocktails* came *Travels with a Curator*, virtual excursions to mostly European destinations, and *Frick Five*, lighthearted but thought-provoking interviews with Frick curators and their colleagues. All three series feature

Salomon and Ng in illuminating explorations of art, culture, and history.

Remarking on the translation of the Frick's characteristic intimacy to the digital realm, Salomon explains, "In a sense, we have flipped the museum experience on its head. Instead of inviting you into the Frick family's former home, Aimee and I are bringing the treasures of the museum directly into your living rooms."

The outpouring of praise for these online offerings has been astounding. In July, *The Wall Street Journal* lauded *Cocktails* and *Travels* as "an entertaining crash course in art history and a wonderful introduction to the riches of The Frick Collection" and, in August, *Cocktails* was featured in both *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. This critical acclaim is echoed by enthusiastic audience members, who have taken the Frick's programming as an opportunity to gather with loved ones at home or via video call to reflect together on works of art.

Trudi Richardson, a *Cocktails* fan from Manhattan's Upper East Side, used the series to reconnect with her girlhood friend Lucille. Now in her mid-seventies, Trudi shared, "We 'see' each other online on Friday afternoons, before the show starts. We exchange photos of ourselves and our drinks of choice, and after each episode we giggle and discuss over text what we've learned. At a time of high anxiety, twenty minutes with a charming curator is the perfect escape."

The expansion of the Frick's online programming has brought renewed attention to its virtual platforms. An early adopter of digital content within the art world, the Frick was among the first major museums

to create a virtual tour on its website, in 1998, and was one of the original seventeen institutions that helped launch Google Arts & Culture. The Frick's website offers a trove of virtual exhibitions, digitized collections, and archived lectures and symposia, and its YouTube subscribers have tripled since lockdown, with *Cocktails* and other new video series surpassing one million views. The institution cultivates a lively social media presence whose audience has increased nearly 50% since March, climbing to over half a million followers across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The Frick's innovative online content has broadened its community in meaningful ways, introducing the museum and library to individuals not previously familiar with their diverse offerings. Susan Siris Wexler of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, has shared her love of *Cocktails with a Curator* with fellow members of the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, a program that offers extracurricular activities to seniors. Susan reports, "The Frick is one of my treats in the time of COVID. We're faithful attendees of the delightful cocktail hour and also enjoy your marvelous archived lectures. We all very much appreciate what you have done to make valuable the many hours of distancing."

The Frick's education department was also quick to respond to the museum's closure by adapting its onsite programs to virtual platforms. Since April, Frick Connections has offered a lineup of inspiring content and activities, including art-making and writing prompts, videos featuring community partners, and Untold Histories, a blog series



spotlighting the Frick family's domestic workers, employed when the mansion was a private home. In *Continue the Conversation*, Frick educators lead thoughtful dialogues in real time through video conferencing.

Free guided virtual visits for middle school, high school, and college groups have proven especially popular, serving some 1,600 students since April. Kimberly Pearson, an English teacher from Gunston Middle School in Arlington, Virginia, recounted, "Many of my students have never been to New York, and a visit to the Frick would normally not be feasible. Our virtual experience expanded my students' worldview and created a sense of joy and continuity for our community. The insights we shared together were the perfect capstone to a school year unexpectedly thrown into chaos—it felt like all was not lost."

In order to aid students and art historians impacted by the physical closures of research centers and archives, the Frick Art Reference

Library has been hard at work developing ways to serve scholars working from home. The library, long recognized as a leader in digital art history, regularly hosts webinars guiding participants through the multitude of online tools available to them, including WorldCat and the Frick Digital Collections. Other online events have included a summer book club featuring a conversation with Robert M. Edsel, author of *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* (2009). These and other programs have introduced users to the thousands of ever-growing free resources housed digitally by the library and peer institutions.

The restrictions necessitated by the pandemic have, ironically, created an important opportunity to engage and serve a broader audience seeking comfort in art. Reflecting on the popularity of *Cocktails* and other online offerings, Ng noted, "What has been particularly rewarding is connecting with

people around the country and the world, some of whom have never before stepped foot in the Frick. It's amazing to think that these new programs have brought such disparate audiences together, some seeking solace, entertainment, education, or escape—or a little bit of all of these."

Art, after all, offers ways to ponder life—a moment rendered timeless, a personal experience shared collectively. A YouTube viewer praising Frick programming in the comments section may have put it best: "What a time in the world to step back and embrace the universal."—Noah Purdy, *Assistant Editor for External Affairs*

ABOVE
Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator
Xavier F. Salomon discusses Rembrandt's *Polish Rider*
during an episode of *Cocktails with a Curator*.

Virtual programs have been made possible, in part, by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Planned Giving at the Frick

Trustee Peter P. Blanchard III Honors His Great-Grandfather's Legacy

Peter P. Blanchard III is the great-grandson of Henry Clay Frick and has been a Trustee of The Frick Collection for nearly twenty years. Recently he decided to build on his great-grandfather's legacy by joining the Henry Clay Frick Associates, a group of individuals who have remembered The Frick Collection through planned giving.

Blanchard is an educator, preservationist, and founder of the Dendroica Foundation, which is dedicated to promoting and conserving the environment. He is currently a board member of the Helen Clay Frick Foundation and the Board Chairman of Greenwood Gardens, a public garden in Short Hills, New Jersey, that he and his wife, Sofia, established in 2003. In the interview below, he discusses why making a planned gift to the Frick is so important.

Rebecca Brooke, Editor: What prompted you to make a planned gift now?

Peter Blanchard: I've been intending to make a legacy gift to the Frick for several years, well before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in New York City in March. The swiftness with which the virus spread around the globe underscores the rapidity of how life's fortunes and prospects can change, as well as the need for safeguarding the causes that one and one's family truly believe in.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Peter P. Blanchard III and his wife, Sofia

RIGHT

Peter Blanchard (left) and several other great-grandchildren of Henry Clay Frick at the twentieth anniversary celebration of the museum's opening, December 1955.

RB: In what ways are you inspired by the legacy of your great-grandfather?

PB: I admit that while growing up I was a bit overwhelmed by my family history—the grandeur of my great-grandfather's residence at 1 East 70th Street, the importance of his art collection, and his reputation as a hard-driving industrialist. In college, as an art history major, I began to realize the tremendous benefits of his legacy to the larger world. Roaming anonymously through the galleries of the Collection (and recognized as a family member by only a few of the security staff), I experience both pleasure and pride in seeing how much the Frick is valued and enjoyed by visitors. The museum and the Frick Art Reference Library truly provide a cultural haven, a sanctuary that inspires and delights.

RB: What is your earliest memory of The Frick Collection?

PB: I remember attending the celebration [in December 1955] commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the museum's opening to the public. One memory from that evening is frozen in time, captured in a photograph of a group of my cousins, gazing into the fountain pool in the Garden Court [below]. I seem to be losing my balance!

RB: What memories do you have of Helen, Henry Clay Frick's daughter?

PB: I have many fond memories of my great-aunt Helen [founder, in 1920, of the Frick Art Reference Library]. My father and I invariably celebrated Thanksgiving with her and other family members at her farm



in Bedford, New York. I'll always remember the cozy darkness of her eighteenth-century farmhouse with its low doors and ceilings and its glowing fireplace, where Aunt Helen presided. She was keenly interested in knowing what the younger generation was up to, and I deeply appreciated that in 1974 she attended my Princeton graduation, at age 86!

Whenever I visit the Frick, I can still feel my great-aunt's presence. I imagine being in her company on the way up to her office in the library, where her lifelong passion for art unfolded. In the library lobby, Aunt Helen was always visibly pleased to point out two memorable items: a sizable rack of black skirts, which she made mandatory for "lady scholars" who had the misfortune of arriving in pants [a policy discontinued in 1989], and a sign which forbade smoking. The sign proclaimed, "Place your butts here!" Aunt Helen's rules were strict. Although she was diminutive and became increasingly frail with age, her presence was formidable.

RB: Do you have a favorite work of art in the permanent collection?

PB: Constable's *White Horse* is unquestionably my favorite painting. I have long admired the artist's depiction of rural England at a time when such pristine and evocative scenery was already under siege by the advances of the Industrial Revolution. I am completely drawn into the picture, finding myself standing on the river's edge as I watch the ferrying of the white horse to the towpath on the opposite bank. I imagine following the meandering path to the meadows beyond, under the resplendent clouds of a



CHRISTINE A. RUTLER

Constable sky, fully expecting a sun shower!

Many years ago, Everett Fahy, the Frick's Director from 1973 to 1986, presented me with facsimiles of two of Constable's sketchbooks. Leafing through the pages of pencil drawings with their smudges and occasional evidence of raindrops is like peering over the great artist's shoulder as he worked.

RB: What are your hopes for the future of The Frick Collection?

PB: I want the Frick to always remain the great oasis of beauty that my great-grandfather intended. While the Frick is undergoing the necessary process of revitalization—a project in which I've been closely involved—it is critical that its residential character not be diminished. Enhancing the visitor experience, facilitating greater educational outreach, expanding exhibition space, and more fully integrating the museum and library are all laudable and achievable goals. During the renovation, great pains are being taken to preserve the magic of the place—its aura of intimacy and quiet contemplation. We always want visitors to feel as if they are stepping back in time, to be able to savor and reflect.

RB: What is the value of supporting cultural institutions like the Frick with a planned gift?

PB: A planned gift represents the continuation of a love affair. It is the most powerful vote of confidence in an organization that one can make. Such gifts reflect an individual's recognition that his or her plans and actions are limited by the relative brevity of a lifetime. Through a legacy gift, one's passion for the mission of an institution can live on in perpetuity.

Invest in the Frick's Future

The Henry Clay Frick Associates is a group of thoughtful individuals who have remembered The Frick Collection through planned giving. Contribute to the Frick's future by making a special gift, such as a bequest in your will. Your legacy—regardless of size—will help support exhibitions, research, conservation projects, and education programs for generations to come.

For confidential help or more information about how to plan your gift, please contact Sara Muskulus, Manager of Grants and Planned Giving, at 646.783.5803 or muskulus@frick.org.

Building Project Update

Preserving and Protecting the 70th Street Garden

As The Frick Collection prepares for the renovation and enhancement of its historic buildings, steps are now being taken to protect and preserve elements of the 70th Street Garden before construction begins early next year.

The elevated garden was designed in 1977 by British landscape architect Russell Page (1906–1985) and was constructed at the same time as the museum's reception hall. Page played with symmetry and asymmetry to enhance the double trompe-l'œil perspective experienced by viewers from inside the new interior space and from below, on East 70th Street. Using the prominent rectangular pool, flowerbeds, and low plantings dotted with trees, he created painterly effects that evoke vistas by Fragonard and Boucher.

After completing the garden, Page remained a consultant until 1981. In collaboration with Galen Lee, the museum's horticulturist for more than forty years (see opposite page), he would periodically visit the Frick to make alterations when necessary, based on whether or not specific plants were thriving. Notes from Page's original design and his subsequent visits are consulted by Lee to this day.

In order to ensure that garden elements will be protected during construction and then reinstalled in keeping with Page's vision, the Frick has assembled a team of experts to oversee the garden's conservation. The team includes preservation architects Beyer Blinder Belle (which recently completed the

acclaimed restoration of Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania), public garden designer Lynden Miller, and the landscape architecture firm MPFP. Noted stonework specialist Nicholson and Galloway will restore the garden's architectural backdrop, which incorporates eight decorative stone carvings repurposed from the elaborate porte-cochère of the Carrère and Hastings residence (1914) and from the façade of the original Frick Art Reference Library (1925). Various components will be photographed, dismantled, and catalogued before being sent offsite for restoration. The north wall of the garden will be temporarily removed to undergo restoration, while the east wall will be conserved onsite. Similarly, the wrought-iron gate—also once part of the mansion's porte-cochère—will be repaired and repainted offsite.

Some garden features have shifted over the past four decades and will benefit from reinstallation, including the pool's coping stones and the decorative bluestone edging that defines the garden pathways. Several trees have outgrown Page's intended scale, while others are replacements made following damage from storms or disease. The fruiting trees will be transported to a nursery in Upstate New York, where they will be maintained for the duration of the project, ultimately to be replanted at the Frick following construction. The koi will be moved from the pond to a temporary tank in the Fifth Avenue Garden. When the stone walls, gate, pool, pebble paths, and other elements are reinstalled, visitors and passersby will once again be able to enjoy views of Page's garden.—*Rebecca Brooke, Editor*

RIGHT

The Frick's 70th Street Garden, designed by Russell Page and constructed in 1977.



MICHAEL BODYCOMB

Horticulturist Galen Lee Retires

More Than Forty Years Caring for
Two Beloved Gardens

After caring for the Frick's gardens for more than four decades, Galen Lee retired in July. Fortunately, he will continue to consult with the building project team to help restore elements of the 70th Street Garden before and during construction.

Galen's cultural lexicon and experiences, coupled with his boundless energy and big personality, are unmatched. He is a fixture of the Upper East Side; often, when someone learns that you work at the Frick, the first question asked is, "Do you know Galen Lee?" Colleagues describe this phenomenon as "Six Degrees of Separation from Galen."

Galen was hired in 1977 at the suggestion of British landscape architect Russell Page, and he played an integral role in selecting plants for the new 70th Street Garden, then under construction. For the next forty-three years, he was a dedicated and enthusiastic caregiver to the flowers and trees that surround Henry Clay Frick's Gilded Age home. Galen's care of the Frick's famous magnolia trees, hydrangeas, tulips, and other plants has been remarkable. The beautiful seasonal plantings he chose for the Garden Court were equally beloved: amaryllis, lilies, orchids, palm trees, and many others. His skill and talent have been appreciated by thousands of museum visitors and the many passersby who stroll down Fifth Avenue or East 70th Street, but for our Frick family, Galen has provided so much more.

For years, Galen cultivated herbs and even some vegetables in the Fifth Avenue Garden and on the library's penthouse terrace. Many of these herbs ended up in dishes prepared for the staff and special guests by the Frick's former chefs, Joseph Teresa and Tony Huebe.



Some of us were fortunate enough to have been the recipients of Frick-grown tomatoes and peppers. Galen also nursed many of our office plants back from the brink of death. I doubt there is another staff in New York City (or anywhere, for that matter) that has been the beneficiary of such wonderful perks.

Galen's talents do not end with horticulture. On numerous occasions, his input was vital when choosing furnishings, carpets, and window treatments for many of the rooms on the mansion's second floor. His excellent taste, imagination, and design sense are legendary. Over the years, his selection and execution of stunning floral arrangements and table coverings magically transformed the galleries and Garden Court, providing breathtaking settings for memorable parties, dinners, and countless special events.

Interactions with Galen are never dull. He is known for his directness, candor, and distinct opinions on politics, culture, and relationships. Always, his great sense of humor leavened it all. He often could be observed holding court in the staff lunch room, regaling his fellow diners with entertaining stories

or impassioned conversations. The range of topics about which he can opine is impressive, and colleagues routinely marveled at the number of skills that he has mastered, his encyclopedic knowledge in diverse fields, and his intellectual curiosity. His willingness to pitch in and help out is commendable, and he could be counted on every August to host a session or two for Staff Education Day: orchid repotting, windowsill gardening, flower-crown weaving. Since the Frick's first Take Your Children to Work Day in 2006, Galen was an enthusiastic participant, leading drawing and photography activities and—the highlight, always—helping the kids feed the koi in the pool of the 70th Street Garden.

All of us here wish Galen a wonderful retirement. Thank you, Galen, for everything you've done for The Frick Collection.
—Ian Wardropper, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Director

ABOVE
Galen Lee planting water lilies, one of his many seasonal tasks as the Frick's longtime horticulturist.

The Sleeve Should Be Illegal

Cultural Luminaries Share Thoughts on Favorite Frick Works

A few years ago at a Greenwich Village dinner party, the artist Darren Waterston described his yearly pilgrimage from the West Coast to the Frick to spend time with Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert* (cover, opposite page). In attendance that evening was the Frick's Editor in Chief, Michaelyn Mitchell, who was inspired by Waterston's account of his annual visits to produce a collection of musings and meditations by artists, writers, and other cultural figures, each sharing how a painting or sculpture from the museum has moved or intrigued them. The resulting volume, *The Sleeve Should Be Illegal & Other Reflections on Art at the Frick*, will be published in January in association with

DelMonico Books/D.A.P. New York. Adam Gopnik wrote the foreword, as well as an essay on Whistler's *Arrangement in Black and Gold: Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac*. Among the sixty-some other contributors are André Aciman, Rosanne Cash, Teresita Fernández, Carolina Herrera, Abbi Jacobson, Bill T. Jones, Julie Mehretu, Diana Rigg, and Simon Schama.

For many contributors, their chosen work evokes a specific memory, catapulting them into the past like Proust's madeleines or Kane's Rosebud. Donald Fagen contrasts the "perfect love" depicted in Fragonard's famed panels with an ill-fated dalliance. Jonathan Lethem recalls his senior year of high school,

when he and a friend would enter the "cool stone temple" on Fifth Avenue to admire the velvet sleeve of Holbein's iconic *Sir Thomas More*, so sumptuous it "should be illegal" (the origin of the volume's enigmatic title). Together, such stories remind us how a work is carried forward through time, invested with emotional resonance by the viewers who have stood before it.—*Christopher Snow Hopkins, Assistant Editor*

The following is an excerpt from the anthology, which is made possible by The Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Charitable Foundation. Members can preorder copies at sales@frick.org.

Rachel Feinstein and John Currin Discuss Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert*

Looking at a painting over and over again never gets old, especially when you can do so together as two artists. Each time, we notice something different, and with two sets of discerning eyes, there is more to see, especially with Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert*, which we first saw many years ago. Looking at the painting is like a game; each time, some new visual clue is revealed—like the waterspout on the bottom far left under the rocks, spotted only recently. There are so many little gems scattered throughout the painting.

Rachel: It was the strange malachite green rocks that initially caught my eye. They make me think of Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings*. The mythical rocks, their weird structure and odd shapes, could be the

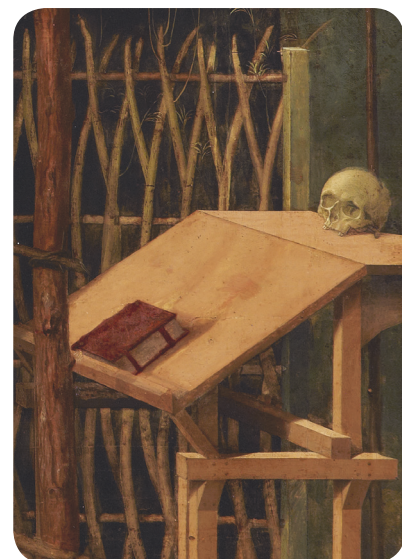
setting for a dark fairy tale and remind me of the rocks on the Led Zeppelin *Houses of the Holy* album cover. I always wonder why the rocks are that strange green color. John says Bellini might have used a glaze on top of that bottom layer of green or that the original color simply turned another shade with age. Either way, the original color is now long gone. This makes me think about Greek and Roman sculptures—how their stark whiteness has become part of their everlasting beauty even though they were originally garishly painted by their creators.

I've always been interested in how beauty and meaning change with the times, and the malachite green rocks in Bellini's *St. Francis* first spoke to me for this reason. Like a reread book, a painting seen at a later

period of your life is not the same painting. The significance or interpretation changes with the viewer.

John: The details of the leaves, little weeds, and sticks coming up through the rocks are what I love most in this painting. It's as if Bellini, through those sharp leaves, is showing the clarity you feel from being an ascetic monk living alone in a cave.

Rachel: That moment of isolation is fascinating in the context of the situation we are in now because of COVID-19. Our family of five may not be living alone in a cave right now, but due to the current circumstances, we have turned more inward, like Saint Francis. Looking at this image and its sharp clarity during this time of fear and uncertainty is very soothing and inspirational.



Details from Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1424/1435–1516),
St. Francis in the Desert (center), ca. 1476–78,
oil on panel, The Frick Collection

Hearth and Home near Haarlem

Salomon van Ruysdael's *Landscape with Farmhouse*

In September, Trustee Kate Feldstein gifted to the Frick a landscape by the Dutch seventeenth-century artist Salomon van Ruysdael. The panel joins his larger, later *River Scene: Men Dragging a Net* (inside back cover), purchased by Henry Clay Frick in 1905. Unlike his better-known river views, *Landscape with Farmhouse* (opposite page) is part of a group of modest paintings made during the early years of the artist's career. In these fairly monochromatic pictures Van Ruysdael responded to Haarlem's countryside, evoking the atmosphere of the nearby dunes. Instead of rivers, herds, ferries, and fishermen—the elements often encountered in his later paintings—this smaller work depicts a sandy road crossing the picture plane diagonally, guiding viewers along ramshackle farmhouses and a collapsed hayrick. Just two figures (along with a pig) populate the scene: one seated, opposite the house, and the other disappearing down the road. The prominently placed farmhouse seems barely able to stand on its own, but it still provides comfort, as the whiff of smoke coming from its chimney indicates.

Van Ruysdael relied heavily on browns and yellows to render the wooden buildings and fences, the thatched roofs, and the dirt road. The other half of the composition announces an oncoming storm. Dark clouds sweep in from the right, and the direction of the smoke coming from the chimney, too, suggests that the sun is giving way to more temperamental weather.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Salomon van Ruysdael (ca. 1602–1670), *Landscape with Farmhouse*, 1628, oil on panel, The Frick Collection, gift of Kathleen Feldstein

The panel is signed and dated in the bottom right corner: “S. v. Ruysdael 1628.” The spelling of the artist's last name and the painting's resemblance to his other works of the period confirm both authorship and date. Salomon would drop the extra *e* in his last name by 1631, from then on spelling it as “Ruysdael.” At a time when surnames were inconsistently used, Salomon and two of his three brothers changed their last name from De Gooyer—denoting their native region—to Van Ruysdael (or a version thereof), after a castle within that area, suggesting that their ancestors might have been tenants on that estate.

Salomon van Ruysdael thrived in Haarlem, close to the North Sea, after he had relocated from Naarden by the early 1620s, together with his brother Isaack (the father of Jacob Isaacksz van Ruysdael). Although it is not known exactly when Salomon was born and no documentation exists about his training, he registered as a painter with the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke in 1623. Archival documents inform us about his family, civic life, and business. He became an active guild member, serving as a warden or dean on various occasions, and was an appreciated member of the Mennonite community. He owned houses adjacent to the city's elite, and his entrepreneurship is evident in several documented undertakings: He was involved with a tanning mill, he invented a method to produce imitation marble, and, in 1658, he registered with the Guild of Cloth Merchants, which allowed him to deal in the bleaching agent blue dye. He also participated in the organization of several lotteries and art auctions and, along

with other artists, argued in favor of legislation for such events.

Together with his contemporaries Esaias van de Velde, Pieter de Molijn, and Jan van Goyen, Van Ruysdael pioneered the depiction of the local Dutch countryside as worthy subject matter. Instead of imagining a fictive Arcadia informed by classical literature and foreign geography, which had previously been common artistic practice, these painters found their inspiration close to home. In art theoretical treatises of the day, aspiring artists were encouraged to explore the countryside, to soak up and draw their surroundings. This development similarly took hold in poetry and printmaking, as a phrase from a 1615 poem by the Dutch author Hendrik Laurensz Spieghel exemplifies: “Parnassus is too far, here is no Helicon—only dunes, woods, and brooks, a sky, the sun.”

It is especially in smaller paintings like *Landscape with Farmhouse* that Van Ruysdael demonstrates the new direction of the landscape genre that he began to pursue in the late 1620s. During this period, the resemblance of his output to simultaneously produced works by Van Goyen and De Molijn is striking. They composed their works along a strong diagonal, exploring the motifs of dunes and cottages with weathered fences, trees, and few but charming figures. The limited color palette, thin layers of paint, and execution of brushwork in what seems to be a swift manner all became characteristic of this new so-called tonal style. These traits brought the Haarlem landscape painters fame as some of the most influential and revolutionary artists in the Netherlands. Their choice of subject matter and economic

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use of materials, together with the quick turnaround in their production, resulted in relatively affordable pieces of art, admired in Haarlem and beyond.

So much so, in fact, that the artist and author Samuel van Hoogstraten recounted an anecdote in his widely read 1678 treatise on the art of painting, the *Inleydingh tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*. Three Haarlem artists, he wrote—Van Goyen among them—participated in a contest to demonstrate that speed need not interfere with quality. This record of Van Goyen's practice, given the correspondences to Van Ruysdael's work, is particularly interesting in relation to *Landscape with Farmhouse*. Van Goyen, we are told,

seemed to model with light and dark, instead of with line or color. In addition, he appeared to let his composition be determined by chance. Within a preliminary composition of light and dark, described by Van Hoogstraten as resembling "a multi-colored agate or marbled paper," the artist looked for pleasant shapes and forms that he then reinforced with little touches of his brush. The result was a landscape whose subdued yet expressive style included farming cottages, faraway views, and bodies of water.

Although Van Hoogstraten's anecdote should be approached critically, it illustrates an early and thought-provoking view on what we now refer to as tonal painting. The

brushwork in *Landscape with Farmhouse*, too, suggests spontaneity—which is how we might interpret the role of chance—and the painting's limited palette emphasizes the ingenious use of light and dark to model the scene. The stark contrasts, much like the threatening clouds, are as much a compositional tool as they are aspects of storytelling. As such, Van Ruysdael's intimate panel adds an important dimension to the museum's holdings of Dutch painting. It beautifully complements the lush views of the Northern countryside in the collection, including his own *River Scene: Men Dragging a Net*. —Rozemarijn Landsman, Anne L. Poulet Curatorial Fellow

Bastiani's *Adoration of the Magi*

"Mingled Hilariousness and Solemnity"

Giovanni Bellini is recognized as one of the preeminent Venetian artists of the fifteenth century, and his *St. Francis in the Desert* (cover) is arguably the most famous painting at The Frick Collection. But Bellini was not the only great master working in the Venetian Republic at the time. The city was bustling with artists who, though their status may have been overshadowed by time and critical preference, produced quality works reflecting a range of techniques and styles. Among them was Lazzaro Bastiani, whose *Adoration of the Magi* (opposite page) is an important counterpart to Bellini's *St. Francis*. These two panels were made at nearly the same time by artists who were very close in age, yet their stylistic approaches differ significantly. Bellini's carefully rendered landscape and atmospheric effects capture a single moment in time, while Bastiani's playful arrangement guides the viewer through a flowing narrative.

Purchased in 1935 by the Frick from the estate of J. P. Morgan, the painting recounts the story of the Magi's journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Bastiani combines this continuous narrative, a compositional practice that was somewhat outdated by the 1470s, with the modern technique of single-point perspective, which allows him to introduce the illusion of depth within the framework of the small panel. The Magi appear at least four times in the lively procession on the road to Bethlehem: in the

window of Herod's palace in Jerusalem; leaving the city; coming around the base of the hill in the middle ground; and with the Holy Family. (They may appear additional times as well, on the distant mountain at right, but it is impossible to tell with certainty as the figures are too faint.) Their multiple appearances create the effect of "mingled hilariousness and solemnity" that delighted Italian Renaissance art historian Bernard Berenson, who critiqued the *Adoration* in his seminal *Venetian Painting in America: The Fifteenth Century* (1916).

In his book, Berenson attributed the panel to Bartolomeo Vivarini, a fifteenth-century Venetian artist known for elaborate altarpieces made in collaboration with his family's workshop. Subsequent scholars have attributed the *Adoration* to other Italian artists, among them Andrea da Murano and Andrea Mantegna. Since the mid-twentieth century, it has been convincingly attributed to Bastiani based on stylistic similarities to his few known signed works. Though Berenson labeled Bastiani a "feebly endowed artist with little if any independence," his corpus has been reevaluated over time. Today, Bastiani is appreciated by many for his eclectic and adaptive tendencies, as well as his frequent use of traditional compositions as a foundation for stylistic experimentation.

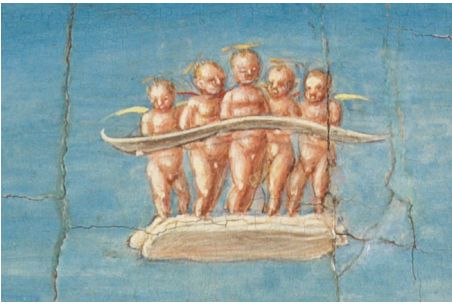
Little is known about Bastiani's early life and career. His name and occupation as a painter were first documented in Venice in 1449 when he bore witness to a will. Although he is not well known today outside of art-historical circles, during his lifetime his work was held in high regard. Documentation exists for at least one commission from

the 1460s and, in 1470, he was contracted by the Scuola di San Marco, an important Venetian confraternity, to paint two scenes of the Life of David (now destroyed). For these latter works, he received the same payment that Jacopo Bellini had earned for a similar project. In 1473, the jewel merchant Antonio Corradi wrote from Pera (now in Istanbul) to his brother-in-law in Venice, asking him to commission from Bastiani a devotional panel of Christ. If Bastiani is dead, he instructs, then the request should be directed to Giovanni Bellini. It is not known if this work was ever realized, but these commissions suggest that by the 1470s Bastiani's talent was considered comparable to that of the celebrated Bellini family, in particular to that of Giovanni, who painted the Frick's iconic *St. Francis in the Desert*.

No document exists to shed light on the *Adoration*'s patron or commission, but its small size suggests that it was created for private devotional use, probably in a domestic space. At the time, such panels were intended to guide the viewer's prayer and encourage contemplation through the immersive experience of close looking. Intricate details anchor the story in the known world, while fanciful elements engage the mind. Take, for example, the angels floating on flat-bottomed clouds, presumably singing from the scrolls unfurled before them (opposite page, top left). Typically, angels in Adoration scenes of the time are clothed or depicted as winged heads in close proximity to the Holy Family, but here Bastiani diverges from convention: His figures are reminiscent of the putti that decorate ancient Roman monuments and sarcophagi. As Venice was not built from

OPPOSITE PAGE

Lazzaro Bastiani (d. 1512), *Adoration of the Magi*, 1470–79, tempera on panel, The Frick Collection. Details appear opposite and on page 14.



Roman ruins, Bastiani may have based the angels on imported sculptural fragments or on the work of artists who had access to such models. Similarly, Mantegna, who was likely influenced by Donatello's work in Padua, depicts comparable nude angels in his *Agony in the Garden* (ca. 1455–56; National Gallery, London). Like Mantegna, Bastiani borrowed a classical, pagan figure and turned it into a Christian motif, a heavenly guide for the Magi's journey.

Another entertaining element is the pair of camels in the Magi's procession, seen as the group departs Jerusalem (detail above). Bastiani presumably had never seen a camel in the flesh, which could account for their odd snake-necked appearance. He inserts them as visual cues to set the scene in Biblical lands, imaginatively extrapolating the animals' forms from written descriptions or previous interpretations by other artists. Jacopo Bellini included similarly serpentine camels in one of his drawings of the Adoration (ca. 1430–60; Musée du Louvre, Paris), which Bastiani may



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have had the opportunity to study. The camel had been illustrated in Italian Adoration scenes since the early fourteenth century, and its iconographic role would have been recognizable to the contemporary viewer. The Magi's horses appear in the middle ground and foreground as the narrative continues, yet the camels are only shown once (and conveniently behind a wall), their distance freeing Bastiani from having to depict them in detail.

By contrast, the attention given to the elaborate textiles worn by the Magi suggests that Bastiani had firsthand knowledge of such garments. The cloth is probably intended to be brocaded velvet—fashionable among Venetian elites of the day—and features a pomegranate pattern adapted from an Eastern motif that, in the Christian context, signifies sacredness and regality. (Note the crown-like top of the pomegranate on the kneeling Magus's shoulder; see detail above.) Such textiles appear in numerous paintings by Bastiani's contemporaries, including Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini, but their patterns are often composed only of simple outlines, rendering the fabric flat and void of texture. Bastiani takes a more invested approach, increasing the pattern's scale and delineating its contours with contrasting colors so that it seems almost

three-dimensional. He uses soft brushstrokes to create the illusion of velvet pile and small hatch marks to suggest the texture of metal-wrapped thread.

The attention to detail throughout the *Adoration* may be the result of Northern artistic influences. By the mid-fifteenth century, works by the likes of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden had been brought to Italy through well-established trade routes between Venice and Bruges. The Northern style was greatly admired by Italian humanists for its meticulous depiction of the natural world. Bastiani combined the Venetian knowledge of color and lighting effects with the realism of the Northern technique: For instance, the pearls decorating the Magi's garments reflect the light of the sun, and the grain pattern of the manger's wooden beams lends a sense of tangibility to the structure. Bastiani's detailed approach extends to the figures within the scene. While many artists imbue the Christ Child with an anachronistic maturity, Bastiani's infant is charmingly realistic as he glances back to his mother for an indication of how to respond to the unfamiliar man tenderly touching his foot.

While Giovanni Bellini championed the use of oil paint in Venice, Bastiani worked mostly in the traditional medium

of tempera-based pigments that was still popular in Florence and Rome, the binding qualities of which have allowed the bright colors to endure through five centuries. The subtleties of color achieved with the thinly applied quick-drying pigment, particularly in the kneeling Magus's robes and the hair of both the humans and animals, are indicative of Bastiani's dexterity; he appears to have worked swiftly and decisively.

Future technical examination could illuminate additional details, including the identities of the faint figures on the mountain in the distance, which may be Bastiani's interpretation of the subsequent narrative describing the Magi's journey home. Matthew 2:12 recounts how, after presenting their gifts to Jesus, the Magi are warned by an angel not to return to Herod with news of the Christ Child. In order to protect the infant from the murderous king, the Magi depart eastward, toward home. The (presumed) continuation of the Magi's travels over the mountain and out of the picture plane is perhaps a device intended to encourage the viewer to reflect upon their own path, both spiritually and in life.

Lazzaro Bastiani died in 1512 in Venice, following a successful career spanning some fifty years. His artistic legacy may remain controversial, but the Frick is fortunate to have one of his finest and perhaps most complex works. Those who pause to relish Bastiani's lively depiction of the Magi's story are offered a window into the visually rich world of fifteenth-century Venice, where he, Bellini, and many others created enduring works that still captivate and delight to this day.—*Gemma McElroy, Curatorial Assistant*

The Frick Celebrates Eighty-Five Years

In December 1935, The Frick Collection opened its doors to the public, sharing with New York City and the world Henry Clay Frick's extraordinary art collection and his family's magnificent Fifth Avenue mansion. Eighty-five years later, the museum remains one of the city's cultural treasures.

Although the galleries are currently closed in preparation for the renovation of our historic buildings and our temporary move to Frick Madison, we are still looking forward to celebrating this milestone together! Please join us in December for virtual anniversary programs and other special content online. Watch your inbox for updates.

Sharese Bullock-Bailey Elected to Board of Trustees

In June, Sharese Bullock-Bailey was elected to the Frick's Board of Trustees after collaborating for several years with the institution through its partnership with the Ghetto Film School, where she currently serves as the school's Chief Strategy and Partnerships Officer. Bullock-Bailey is an Emmy-nominated producer who has funded, distributed, and curated independent media around the world. She brings to the Frick more than twenty years' experience in various roles at arts and early education organizations including Harlem Village Academies, Teach for America, and Learning Matters, Inc. Prior to her tenure at the Ghetto Film School,

she was the Director of Tribeca Teaches at the Tribeca Film Institute and served on the Board of Directors of the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture. In addition to being a member of the Frick's Board, Bullock-Bailey is Vice Chair of the Independent Television Service, a nonprofit organization that funds documentaries for public television.

Remembering Helen Sanger, the Frick's First Andrew W. Mellon Librarian

Helen Sanger, the fifth Chief Librarian of the Frick Art Reference Library, passed away on July 30, 2020, at the age of ninety-six. Born in Java and raised in Hong Kong, Sanger joined the staff of the Frick Art Reference Library in 1947, not long after graduating *cum laude* from Smith College. In 1953, she earned her M.S. in Library Science from Columbia University. She held various positions at the library before being promoted to Chief Librarian in 1978. She was the first to hold the title of Andrew W. Mellon Librarian, which became an endowed position in 1990.

During her long tenure, Sanger oversaw the establishment of the library's conservation department, in 1981, and the merger of the library and the museum, in 1984. After retiring in 1994, she continued to volunteer and conduct research at the library, where she kept in close contact with friends and colleagues for many years.

Stay Connected with the New Bloomberg Connects App

The Frick recently launched a free guide on the Bloomberg Connects app, which provides access not only to the Frick, but to museums, galleries, and a variety of other cultural organizations in New York City and London. Bloomberg will continue to add partners from around the world throughout the coming year.

The app is an exciting new way to virtually explore the Frick galleries and the Frick Art Reference Library while the institution is closed for renovation. Updated regularly with exclusive content, video highlights, and audio commentary about select works, the app can also be used onsite next year at Frick Madison. The app is available for download on both iOS and Android via the Apple App Store and Google Play.

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Frick on the Move

Staff Begins Preparations for Frick Madison



GEORGE KOELLE

All of us at The Frick Collection look forward to welcoming you early in 2021 to our temporary home at Frick Madison, where we will present beloved masterpieces in an entirely new context. The Frick's curators, conservation team, registrars, art handlers, and operations staff have been hard at work preparing to transport the permanent collection five blocks north to 945 Madison Avenue, the museum and library's home for the next two years while our historic buildings at 1 East 70th Street undergo renovation. Likewise, the staff of the Frick Art Reference Library has readied its vast holdings of books, photographs, and archival materials to be sent to offsite storage.

We have missed seeing you in the galleries, at events, and at our many onsite programs, and we eagerly anticipate once again being able to share with you the pleasures of experiencing art in person, together. See you at Frick Madison!



The Frick Collection

1 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021
212.288.0700

Frick Art Reference Library

10 East 71st Street
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212.547.0641

The museum and library are currently closed for renovation. The Frick Collection will reopen to the public in early 2021 at 945 Madison Avenue, the former home of the Whitney Museum of American Art. The temporary location, called Frick Madison, will house the collection, programs, a reading room, and staff during the renovation and expansion of the Frick's historic buildings on East 70th Street.

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Salomon van Ruysdael (ca. 1602–1670),
detail of *River Scene: Men Dragging a Net*, ca. 1667,
oil on canvas, The Frick Collection



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Giovanni Bellini's
St. Francis in the Desert